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# A Study of the Suitability of Japanese “Working Manga” as a Business Case Study

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## Abstract

This article discusses the suitability of the “working manga,” or a Japanese comic that involves working people and their vocation, as a business case method. Such working manga are noteworthy as material for a business case. However, not all working manga are suitable as a business case, and we must use certain standards to choose those that are the most suitable. This article reviews working manga as materials in Japanese business reality, and considers their availability as business cases. This article first discusses a case method to determine the learning and suitability of working manga as a business case. Next, we review a history of Japanese manga, then focus on working manga in particular. We then discuss working manga as a business case across certain topics—human resource management, organizational behavior, career events, and personnel development—using examples from Japanese working manga. Finally, we summarize the availability of working manga as a business case.

**Keywords:** working manga, case method, human resource management

## 1. Introduction

This article discusses the suitability of “working manga,” or Japanese comics that involve working people and their work, as a business case method. As with other genres of manga, a substantial amount of working manga have been published in Japan for many decades, and this has reflected certain aspects of the social and cultural reality of working life in each period. Further, working manga provides both entertainment and vocational insights, and some could even be considered as a guidebook for an occupation (Ito & Crutcher, 2014). Such working manga are noteworthy as material for business cases, in that many books have been published regarding certain business topics (cf. Ishinomori, 1986). However, certain standards must be used to choose those that are suitable, as not all working manga are suitable as business cases. This article reviews working manga as materials that reflect realities in Japanese business, and considers their availability as business cases.

This article first discusses the case method for determining working manga’s learning and suitability as business cases. We then review a history of Japanese manga, then focus on

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working manga in particular. Further, we discuss working manga as business cases across certain topics—human resource management, organizational behavior, career events, and personnel development—using examples from Japanese working manga. Finally, we summarize the availability of working manga as business cases.

## **2. Case method learning and working manga as a business case**

This section discusses the case method for learning and determining the availability of working manga as a business case. As with general business cases composed entirely of text, working manga may be available as a business case, although it includes both pictures and text. We address the creation of certain standards to choose the ideal working manga as business cases by discussing actual manga.

### **2.1 Case method learning**

The case method, which is an educational method using business cases and discussion between an instructor and students, has become increasingly popular in business school. The case method also includes a learning method by which students do not receive various knowledge, but create them (Ellet, 2007). Moreover, Burnes et al. (2007) defined a case method as “a description of episodes of practice; a selection of reality; a slice of life; a story designed and presented as study material; or an exercise, puzzle, or problem” (p.71). They also noted that “case” has at least two meanings: a topic designed for discussion, and one that includes teaching. Thus, the case method facilitates discussion among students and between students and teachers, and increases the instructor’s ability to teach. Burnes et al. (2007) subsequently raised two features in their cases. First, any cases they created or commenced included normal people—sometimes under pressure, but still in reasonably familiar situations. Second, their cases were neither set up nor contrived. Regarding manga, the former is true, while the latter is false. However, the pre-established or contrived story cannot always promote discussion, and especially in working manga, which has been described as a polite, close workplace reality. Moreover, Burnes et al. (2007) aimed to present teaching materials in the case format to generate empathy. We posit that to achieve this objective, working manga is superior to text-only cases: the story and plotlines as well as the visual imagery and alternative points are not only entertainment, but provide support to generate empathy.

Ellet (2007) explained cases using the case method, and three characteristics were necessary: (1) a significant business issue or issues, (2) sufficient information on which to base conclusions, and (3) no stated conclusions (p. 13). Students were then directed to: (i) derive conclusions from the information in the text, (ii) filter out irrelevant or low-value portions of the text, (iii) furnish missing information through inferences, and (iv) associate

evidence from different parts of the case and integrate it into a conclusion (pp. 13-14).

However, he also noted that most business cases included these complicating properties: (a) information that includes “noise,” such as irrelevancies, dead ends, and false, biased, or limited testimony by characters in the case; (b) unstated information, which must be inferred from the information that is stated; and (c) a nonlinear structure, in which related evidence is scattered throughout the text and is often disguised or left to inference (p. 13).

These points—good case characteristics (points 1-3), the students’ tasks in the case method (i-iv), and complicating properties (a-c)—present some insights in discussing how manga is suitable for a case method study. Thus, we suggest that manga is also suitable for case study, and especially in business cases. First, working manga satisfies the characteristics point (1), as they address various issues in the business environment, as explained in following sections. Second, regarding characteristics point (2), while working manga does not include as much textual information, it does include substantial visual information, which accelerates students’ imagination and inference (iii). Third, regarding characteristics point (3), working manga possess certain conclusions in their stories. Specifically, an instructor can present manga for a case but exclude part of the conclusion, then reveal this later for further discussion. All participants understand that the conclusion in manga is one of many possibilities, and they can further discuss how this conclusion is acceptable, among other conclusions. Fourth, working manga includes complicating properties (a-c), as these points are also characteristics of manga. Visual expressions make some “noise,” and include various information in their illustrations; naturally, these are not presented in a nonlinear structure. These complicating properties derive from the expressions in manga, which promote students’ ingenuity, and such interpretive activities as “reading between the lines” (Ito & Crutcher, 2014).

Burnes et al. (2007) claimed that the case method was suitable for discussion lectures, and proposed four principles for discussion teaching with the case method: (1) A discussion class is a partnership, in which students and their instructor share the responsibilities and power of teaching, and the privilege of learning together. (2) A discussion group must evolve, from a collection of individuals into a learning community with shared values and common goals. (3) By forging a primary (although not exclusive) alliance with students, the discussion leader can help them gain a command of the course material. (4) Discussion teaching requires dual competencies: the ability to both manage content and process it (Burnes et al., 2007, p. 24). These principles are necessary to stimulate students’ spontaneous participation and cultivate a learning community; in this context, Cross (1998) defines this community as “groups of people engaged in intellectual interaction for the purpose of learning.” Further, it is ideal that students build “communities of practice,” or groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or passion about a topic, and who

deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis (Wenger et al., 2002, p.4).

Burnes et al. (2007) also discuss the features of good cases by considering how to write them. They proposed that it was better to write a case and learn about the totality of case method instruction. In writing a case, they considered what comprised a good case, and preferred those that made it both fun and fascinating for students to apply their inductive skills and reasoning, from specific to general statements. Burnes et al. (2000) facilitated this by positing that an effective case portrayed real people in the moment of decision, or characters “in the round” (p.287). These points are available in all working manga. Similarly, the authors considered the following eight general characteristics: (1) It is possible to perceive the story as a web of decisions that will lead to consequences. (2) The decision involves a protagonist (not always the teacher) who must analyze a situation, identify alternative courses of action, and act—typically under pressure. (3) The story takes place in a complex context (a school, organization, or society) with characteristics that other settings share. (4) A few key players, or observant witnesses, are available to provide their points of view. They not only see things differently from the protagonist, but may also present completely different accounts of the same events. Their goals and agendas may completely oppose the protagonist’s. For example, a teacher wants to enthrall students with the beauty of the subject taught, while the students simply want to pass the course. (5) As the prospective case writer aided by his or her sounding board considers the material, one broadly applicable theme can be noted. (6) The story has one major decision point, although with several minor forks in the path, and a resolution may follow that reveals the road taken. However, one can imagine the material packaged into a rich portion of data, leading to one complex, intriguing moment: the end of the “A” case. The purpose of this design is to present the discussion group with enough questions to generate a discussion of an hour and a half or more, with useful considerations. (7) The events perplex and irritate the character who experienced them. They stick in the mind like grit in oysters, and shells of conjecture grow around them. “How could I have handled this better?” “What went wrong?” “Why didn’t I see this coming?” “What can I do to prevent this from happening again?” Some of the best case stories have mentally marinated for years before being written. (8) When analyzed, the case events yield common rules of thumb that can apply to a variety of the fundamental lessons in a case situation, although this analysis may take time and require focused questioning and guidance from a discussion leader. However, the optimum teaching cases demonstrate human nature beyond surface events (p. 288). These characteristics can be considered as not only as the superior points of working manga, but also as the standards for choosing them and picking better scenes from them. For these better cases, we must often not only distinguish better working manga from others, but also choose better scenes

from the entire story. Often, both appropriate and inappropriate scenes co-exist due to the changes and transfers that occur with the entire story. For example, Arai (1990-1994) provides some applicable scenes that reflect Japanese management characteristics and salespersons’ works in the first half, but none in the second half because of the story changing. In contrast, even the first quarter of Hirokane’s (1983-)<sup>1</sup> story was primarily romance, then subsequently transitioned to a standard working manga. Choosing adequate scenes from an entire working manga story arc is an important task in making a better case for working manga; thus, Burnes et al. (2007) proposed a useful index to accomplish this.

## 2.2 Working manga and the case study method

Working manga also have some features that are suitable for the case method. First, and generally, working manga has an overwhelming familiarity for its readers, which helps students overcome the wall that prevents them from learning. Second, the situations that occur in working manga beyond workplace reality are more suitable for a case method discussion. For example, working manga often describe a workplace reality that is derived from close research and investigation, but often draw dramatic scenes or storylines as entertainment. Sometimes they are “convenient” situations; for example, a billionaire suddenly appears and saves the main character’s company (cf. Motomiya, 1994-2002). While these are unique and stimulating situations that rarely occur, they are suitable for case method study. Typically, situations in the case actually exist, and this limitation can be overcome by using working manga. Third, working manga can facilitate discussions in a case method study to allow observers to compare characters and their work performance. In working manga, the same characters often appear, and they engage in the same occupation. They may be colleagues, or have a team relationship, or are perhaps rivals. Valuable insights are gained by a discussion’s focus on a certain character in the relationship, and comparing them with characters in their relationship or in competitive processes.

Therefore, various perspectives reveal working manga as suitable for a case method study, as this method contributes value in its usefulness.

## 2.3 Selecting the working manga for our study

While many manga titles were considered as candidates for a business case, we did not consider all manga. One reason is that our abilities are limited, and another is that much manga is not adequate to use as material for a business case. Therefore, we must first distinguish what manga is adequate.

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<sup>1</sup> In the first chapter of Hirokane’s (1983-1992) entire saga. We consider his gathered works that consist of various chapters as one single work.

We decided to delineate some points to select manga as materials prior to a broader discussion. First, we selected manga in which the primary and secondary characters actually work in a certain company, shop, or organization. This naturally includes the “salaryman” and many professionals who work in various organizations. Accordingly, this point eliminates many manga titles despite their tremendous popularity, both domestically and internationally. Second, we chose manga in which the main characters work legally, although many titles exist in which the main characters work outside of such fields, such as swindlers (Natsuhara & Kuromaru, 2003-2008), illegal lenders (Manabe, 2004-), and a freelance sniper (Saito, 1968-). These types of manga are also thought-provoking (cf. Urushida, 2004), but we did not address these. Third, we chose manga in which the main characters work “ordinarily.” From an entertainment perspective, some manga contains main characters that work unconventionally. For example, *Motomiya* (1994-2002) is often considered a typical working manga because the title includes “salaryman,” and researchers have used this manga to discuss Japanese workers (Matanle, McCann, & Ashmore, 2008). However, the main character Kintaro always works unconventionally, based on his own values and behavioral norms derived from his former career in a motorcycle gang. He performs well in the story, but the manga contains many extraordinary descriptions contrary to the normal salaryman and working style.

Another manga by Akimoto (1976-2016), which is popular in Japan, includes a policeman as its main character, but he does no substantial work. We did not use these types of manga, as this article would convey many misunderstandings of Japanese working life in its case study. Finally, we included manga that could be easily obtained in Japanese bookstores at present, as some manga may be suitable for case study, but could be difficult to acquire. Those who complete the case study may wish to obtain the original manga to grasp the entire story not covered in the case.

Regarding the aforementioned four points—working in some organizations, legality, conventionality and availability—we consider many possible manga titles as adequate candidates in this case study.

### **3. History of Japanese working manga**

We must first survey a history of Japanese manga in general, and working manga in particular, before discussing working manga as a business case. We ultimately intend to clarify working manga’s position among the entire Japanese manga genre.

#### **3.1 The power of Japanese manga**

Manga in Japan have addressed various topics, phenomena, and human life, which researchers have discussed: for example, religion (MacWilliams, 2000), history (Rosenbaum,

2013), gender (Tsurumi, 2000), family (Lee, 2000), philosophy (Steiff & Barkman, 2010), and working life. Some of these manga were exported and have had a substantial impact internationally (Ito & Crutcher, 2014). Japanese manga has reflected Japanese art history and its unique growth (cf. Koyama-Richard, 2007). Japan’s manga industry has a vast market compared with foreign countries (Mayfield, Mayfield, & Genestre, 2001). This influence has spread globally, beyond Japan’s borders, and has evolved unique to each country and culture as “global manga” (Brienza, 2015).

Kinsella (2000) classified a short history of Japanese manga since the 1920s, and claimed that while modern Japanese manga originated in the 1920s, the impressive spectrum of graphic styles and genres that comprise the medium only emerged after World War II, with most in the brief period since 1960. The period since the 1980s has almost certainly been the highest density of the cultural production and distribution of manga (Kinsella, 2000, pp.19-20). Comic strips were a primary method to express manga until the end of World War II; however, some manga artists in the early postwar period produced their manga in rental book shops, a genre called “*gekiga*-style.” This style was intended for adults, and became the origins of the working manga market. Kinsella (2000) explained that the usage of the term “manga” included all types of Japanese cartoons, comic strips, and manga books and magazines, but manga from the 1950s also attained a second and more specialized usage that distinguished manga from the emergent *gekiga* tradition. Manga in this secondary usage refers to child-oriented, cute, fantastical, and sometimes educational manga, primarily associated with Tezuka Osamu (p.29). That trend overshadowed *gekiga* culture, and present-day manga includes both markets and genres that encompass adults and children, which naturally includes working manga. Kinsella (2000) also discussed the entire history of manga until the 2000s, while we focus on working manga, and pointed out that some reader categories were divided by readers’ ages: children, boys, girls, and adults. The upper categories change as the reader ages. The primary working manga category includes an adult readers’ category, which includes both youth and adult magazines, and both categories have published many working manga titles. Specifically, adult magazine categories typically have many working manga titles because their readers are generally working people.

Craig (2000) explained the power of Japanese manga by first noting its historical roots. From the Edo era in the 17th century, such traditional arts as ukiyo-e, kabuki, or Noh theater have an expressive creativity as the roots of manga. Alternatively, Ito and Crutcher (2014) suggested that the origins of manga were derived from the 11th century, and specifically, the illustrated scrolls from *The Tale of Genji*. Craig (2000) noted Osamu Tezuka as a representative example of a Japanese manga artist who combined a physical manga form imported from the West with a centuries-old Japanese tradition of narrative art and illustrated humor, and added important innovations of his own to create manga as totally



new genre of art (p.8).

Craig (2000) also claimed that Japanese manga's power has various origins. First, it is derived from the quality and creativity in traditional Japanese arts. Second, Japanese pop culture—including manga—wholeheartedly embraces life in all its dimensions, with relatively little effort to shield its audience from the unpleasant aspects of life or to heighten people to more noble or politically correct standards (Craig, 2000, p.12). This feature is the same in Japanese working manga for working people, as working manga acts as a sort of “refrigerant” for working people. Third, Japanese pop cultural content contains a strong strain of idealism, innocence, and dreams (Craig, 2000, p.13). On the one hand, this feature leads Japanese manga toward non-realistic expressions or exaggerated fiction; on the other hand, it demonstrates the ideal norm for various aspects of life, and even asks working people to consider an ideal way to work. Fourth, Japanese popular culture involves its closeness to the ordinary, everyday lives of its audience (Craig, 2000, p.13). This often allows Japanese working manga to avoid criticism in its exaggerated fiction, and enables it to deal with them as case method materials.

Craig (2000) also indicated three themes in Japanese manga: human relations, spiritual growth, and work (p.14). The protagonists in Japanese manga are helped by their friends, or those around them, which helps them to grow. In manga intended for children, they typically become increasingly stronger, while in working manga they grow more capable, with spiritual growth. As both features are naturally available in working manga, these are suitable for a case study. Further, Craig (2000) observed “work” as a prominent theme in Japanese manga, and noted that work as a theme reflected the Japanese's positive attitude toward this sphere of life, which gives their lives meaning (p.14).

Ito and Crutcher (2014) posited that manga should be considered as an agent of socialization, as millions of manga have been created and sold, and influence each generation: children, youth, and young adults.

### **3.2 The history of working manga**

Kinsella (2000) explained that adult manga includes several genres. For example, informational manga is a subset of adult manga, and includes such sub-genres as introductory, business, political, educational, and documentary manga. Kinsella (2000) perceived Ishinomori (1986) as the pioneer of informational manga, which expanded and popularized the adult manga genre (pp.70-71). Further, informational manga is not limited to adults, in that pedagogical manga addresses literature, history, science, art history, or biographies of famous people, and simultaneously entertains and educates children (cf. Koyama-Richard, 2007). Working manga in this article is one genre of information manga as defined by Kinsella (2000), who also clarified that informational manga books with

themes focused on business and corporate management became new themes in weekly adult manga magazines. As will be further discussed, the *Kosaku Shima* series (Hirokane, 1983-) is representative of this genre. Moreover, working manga—and informational manga as a greater genre—are often excluded from Japanese manga, even in adult manga categories (Schodt, 1983), as they depict reality with no fantasy to imagine a “cool” Japan.

Shinjitsu (2010) described the history of the “salaryman-manga,” or a working manga involving a company employee. He classified the entire salaryman-manga history into four periods: the 1950s and 1960s, or before economic growth; the 1970s and the early 1980s, or the economic growth period; the latter part of the 1980s and 1990s, or until the end of the bubble economy; and after the 2000s, or after the end of the bubble economy. The working manga in the first period—the 50s and 60s—was represented by the four-frame comic strip, and especially in newspapers. Some of these still continue today (cf. Ueda, 1982-), in that they describe an ordinary life working in a company as well as having a family. However, this type of manga did not convey the details of working life, but was rather a caricature that drew upon the working people’s trouble with humor.

During the second period, and 1983 in particular, the salaryman-manga’s history substantially began with Hirokane’s (1983-) emergence. This author detailed the saga of one salaryman, Kosaku Shima, and is unique in that several chapters describe his position, an old chapter ended with his promotion to a new position, and the next chapter began with the start of his new job. Hirokane (1983-) has currently written nine chapters, which span the protagonist’s beginnings as a university student to his work in a company.

**Table 1. The saga of Kosaku Shima (Hirokane, 1983-)**

Position (and Chapter)	Student	Ordinary Employee	Assistant Manager	Manager	General Manager	Director	Managing Director	Senior Managing Director	President	Chairman
Period	2014- 2017	2001- 2010	2010- 2013	1983- 1992	1992- 2002	2002- 2005	2005- 2006	2006- 2008	2008- 2013	2013-
Comics	6	8	4	17	13	8	6	5	16	9-

\*The series’ publication began with the “Manager” chapter.

Hirokane’s (1983-) work is a representative salaryman-manga in Japan, and has significantly influenced various other working manga titles. This is because, first, the story describes the reality of actual business. The protagonist Shima works in an electric company, which is derived from the author’s work experience and allows the author to detail much of the reality in business. Shima faces many troubles in his job that are incredibly familiar in an actual work environment. Second, this story includes the

protagonist's entire career; moreover, Shima is sequentially promoted to upper positions and experiences not only many issues, but also a feeling of success in each positions. This means that each generation can sympathize with his plight. Third, and most importantly, he is an ordinary person, and not a superhero. He is quite lucky in the story, and handsome, but is described as an ordinary person, and especially from the first volume. Similarly, he grows as a businessperson, both spiritually and in his capabilities, by overcoming many issues with his colleagues. The Shima character is currently at the top of his company not because he was a superhero, but because he has grown; this is why people can perceive the reality in this story, and why people consider this representative of working manga. After Hirokane (1983-), working manga in this genre still continue to be published, and include such businesses as a stationery company (Arai, 1990-1994), trading company (Hosono, 2014-2015), sportswear company (Takahashi, 1993-1998), and beer company (Kawasumi, 2007-2008).

Many working manga titles in the third period described a search for the ideal work life, Shinjitsu (2010) claimed. After the bubble economy ended, Japanese society experienced a long depression, as reflected in manga storylines. Similarly, a new working manga genre emerged, called "professional manga." The origins of this new genre could be found in works by Tezuka (1973-1983); however, this type of working manga may have begun with Kariya and Hanasaki (1983-) as well as the beginning of a "gourmet manga" (Koyama-Richard, 2007). Instead of a general salaryman-manga, many professional manga emerged to deal with working people in specific industries. The diversification of this value of life influenced working manga not to pursue universal happiness among working people, but to search for diverse values for each person working in each workplace. This genre of working manga has some merits. First, it is easy to describe real working life as limited to its industries. Specific knowledge and reality allows them to weave a story with much reality. Second, it is also easy to illustrate characters' growth in capability as well as spiritually. Although all professional manga do not describe working life in detail, but until recently, much professional manga were published in various areas, such as medicine (Nogizaka, Nagai, & Yoshinuma, 2002-2011; Sato, 2002-2006), firefighting (Soda, 1995-1999), comic editing (Matsuda, 2012-), Italian restaurant service (Sekiya, 2005-2009), public service (Kashiwagi, 2014-), the coast guard (Sato & Komori, 1998-2001), and educational tutoring (Mita, 2003-2007), among others.

As aforementioned, we surveyed a broad history of Japanese manga, and working manga in particular. The latter developed after World War II to describe the lives of working people. Initially, manga depicted a general image of working people, and professional manga subsequently emerged to describe various industries. This article includes both types of manga in the entire working manga genre.

#### **4. A human resource management case in working manga**

Many scenes in working manga relate to the human resource management (HRM) field. However, a small problem exists in using these scenes for the case method: specifically, Japanese-style management (cf. Abegglen, 1958; 2006; Abegglen & Stalk, 1985) and HRM both exist in Japanese companies, and these influence working manga. This is why HRM scenes are somewhat difficult to use in the case method, and especially for foreigners. Therefore, we would have to use cases of working manga that address HRM so we can understand Japanese-style HRM, if these types of cases were used. Naturally, many scenes do not require this consideration.

However, working manga is the best material to understand and discuss Japanese-style management and HRM, and how these function in Japanese companies. Examples include: the lifetime commitment of a work relationship between a company and its personnel; the company’s personnel-recruitment system and the hiring of students; a seniority-based pay and promotion system; a non-radical, cooperative enterprise union; and the HRM department’s centralized control in Japanese companies. Abegglen’s (1958) classic research claimed that these inherent systems were the origin of strength in Japanese companies, and thus, in the Japanese economy. Moreover, the Japanese workplace still retains the following unique cultural characteristics despite recent transfers (Whitehill, 1992), including: high personnel loyalty; traditional, familial relationships; and implicit communication. Abegglen (1958) explained a Japanese company’s similarity to family, and that this metaphor is useful in understanding Japanese companies. Pascale and Athos (1981) also noted these inherent characteristics to compare Japanese and US companies. As working manga reflect these aspects in abundance, they are useful as case studies.

This section attempts to address working manga for each HRM process: recruitment, performance management, reward management, and dismissal and redundancy.

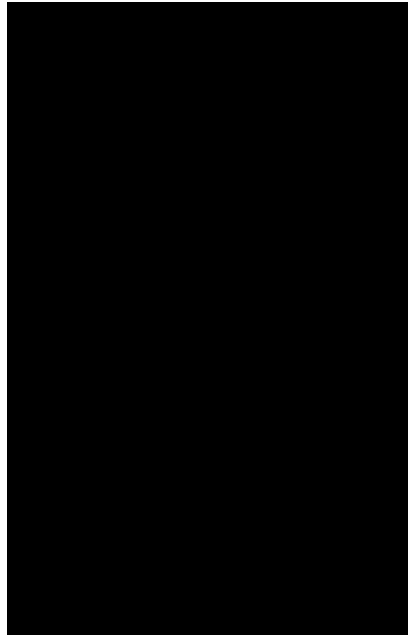
##### **4.1 Recruitment**

Recruitment and selection have always been critical processes for organizations. Both processes are vital stages in establishing the expectations that form a psychological contract that emphasizes two-way communication. Based on this, employees are attracted to and select an organization and the work in an offer just as employers select their employees (Bratton & Gold, 2003). These processes are also important in Japanese companies, although they differ from foreign countries. As previously explained, the Japanese recruitment process is unique (Abegglen, 1958), with some problems to be noted (cf. Firkola, 2011).

To our knowledge, no working manga primarily addresses recruiting. As we will discuss later, job hunting—the opposite aspect of recruiting—is a suitable manga topic (cf. Onoda,

2012-2014). We instead focused on discovering some scenes on the recruiting process.

**Figure 1. Interview scene regarding the recruiting process (Matsuda [2012]. *Juhan-shuttai!*. Vol.1, p. 20.) © Naoko Matsuda 2012)**



(Deleted by the reason of copyright)

A typical recruitment interview in Japan, in which the candidate (this manga's protagonist) was called to the interview. Some interviewers individually evaluate candidates. During the recruiting process, candidates must wear simple suits, as this manga indicates.

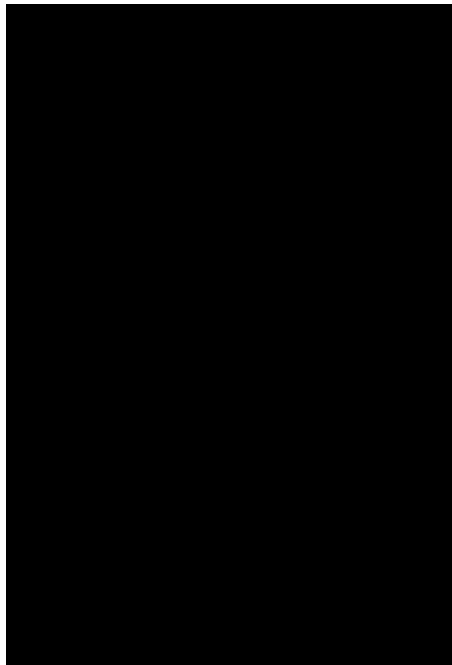
## **4.2 Performance management and appraisal**

Performance management and appraisal have become key features of an organization's drive toward a competitive advantage and achieving high performance, but the most difficult processes (Bratton & Gold, 2003). These not only influence performance, morale, and the motivation of both individuals as well as the organization, but are also used as a basis for reward management, education and development, promotion, and career management, among other outcomes. This presents itself as a double-edged sword in its difficulty: while these performance appraisal processes would improve various HRM problems if employees performed well, poorer performance would exacerbate underlying HRM issues. The basic performance management and appraisal process is an assessment between managers and employees, but the purpose of these management processes has shifted from control to

development (Walton, 1985; Wilson & Western, 2000). Concrete management methods toward this policy include multisource feedback, such as 360° appraisal and feedback (McCarthy & Garavan, 2001), and competency appraisals (Sparrow, 1996).

Appraisal activities often appear in working manga with two scenes. First, they appear as a part of controlling development in everyday communication, rather than as a performance management process. Another scene also includes any evidence of appraisal. These scenes imply how organizations evaluate working behavior. For example, Hirokane’s (1983-) work details how the protagonist Shima observed work by his subordinate in Vietnam. She rectified a factory production delay through all-night work, and Shima evaluated her as a capable employee after this experience (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. All-night work (Hirokane, K. [1999]. *Bucho Shima Kosaku*. Tokyo: Kodansha, Vol.2, p. 24) © Kenshi Hirokane 1999**



(Deleted by the reason of copyright)

Second, these manifest as problematic situations that include a particular dilemma, such as an employee who is disliked in the workplace, but who achieves in their performance. Hirokane’s (1983-) popular character Konno is described as this type of employee.

**Figure 3. The villain, Konno (Hirokane, K. [1999]. *Bucho Shima Kosaku*. Tokyo: Kodansha, Vol.2, p. 24) © Kenshi Hirokane 1999**



(Deleted by the reason of copyright)

Konno is a supervisor of Kosaku Shima, this manga's protagonist. His performance is higher than standard, but he likes political behavior, and often contacts Shima's direct general manager to indicate his disdain for him.

### **4.3 Reward management**

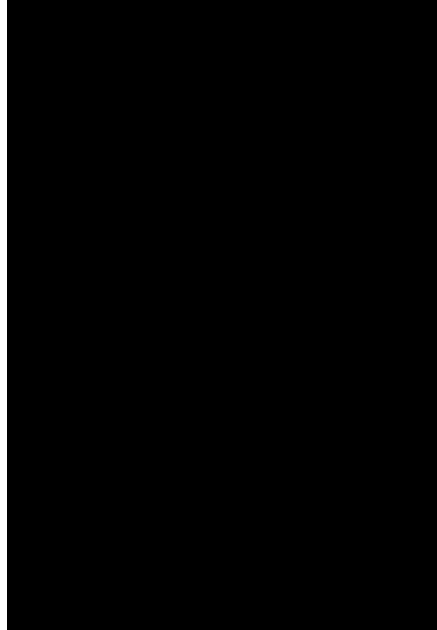
A reward system emphasizes a core facet of the employment relationship. It constitutes an economic exchange or relationship, in that an employee undertakes a certain amount of physical and/or mental effort and accepts others' instructions, then receives a level of payment or reward in return (Bratton & Gold, 2003). The "reward" or "compensation" has both extrinsic and intrinsic meanings, and the reward system's monetary or economic element is the pay system. Three broad reward components exist: base, performance, and indirect pay, the latter of which consists of non-cash items or services. Of these three components, base and indirect pay for individuals are automatically decided by the rewarding institution, with little room to negotiate. Performance-related pay stimulates individuals' performance and commitment, while an evaluation process for individuals' performance between managers and employees. This can be the "symbolic message" for

what the company and managers expect for their employees (Pheffer, 1998).

Any type of salary-related scene would be useful for the case method, but many scenes occur in Japanese working manga in which the characters discuss their salaries; further, there are seldom scenes about the actual reward management process. However, professional sports manga include these scenes in negotiations of the following year’s salary. Moritaka & Adachi (2011-) have particularly addressed various problems with the salary and career of professional baseball players, and included some scenes in which the protagonist negotiated his salary. These are valuable, useful scenes for the case method, in that they discuss salary amounts paid by baseball teams, although this is more useful if the reader has some knowledge of baseball. Moritaka & Adachi’s (2011-) focus on professional baseball is why professional sports-based working manga is suitable as case method material, in that the following year’s salary is decided annually, based on the present year’s performance. Further, their salaries generally consist of a base salary and commissions—as players can earn higher salaries if they achieve certain performance levels—as reward components. Moreover, a salary negotiation process exists between the team and player. In proportion to their performance, players can decide whether to sign the contract. However, there is room to negotiate in how to evaluate their performance. In the below case, the player negotiated with HRM staff to raise his salary, and he succeeded with sophisticated tactics.



**Figure 4. Negotiating his annual salary (Moritaka & Adachi [2012]. *Gurazeni*, Vol.6, p. 114.) © Yuuji Moritaka / Keiji Adachi 2012**



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The HRM staff presented the following year's salary to Bonda (this manga's protagonist and a baseball pitcher). Bonda estimated his annual salary as approximately 26 million yen before the meeting, but the presented salary was 24.5 million yen, lower than his estimation. He subsequently began to negotiate to increase his salary.

#### **4.4 Dismissal and redundancy**

Redundancy and dismissal, in which the employee's job ceases to exist (Torrington, Hall, & Taylor, 2002), is expressed as the Japanese *risutora*, derived from "restructuring." Dessler (2000) explained that there were four bases for dismissal: unsatisfactory performance, misconduct, a lack of job qualifications, and whether the job had changed requirements (or was being eliminated). Torrington, Hall, and Taylor (2002) also explained that dismissal should be one of six "fair" reasons: a lack of capability, conduct, redundancy, retirement, statutory restrictions, or some other substantial reason. In Japan, dismissal due to unsatisfactory performance rarely occurs, as incapable personnel often keep working, instead receiving a later promotion or lower salary. This originates from Japanese management tradition, and especially the concept of lifetime commitment (Abegglen, 1958). Further, the mandatory retirement age is popular in Japan (Debroux, 2003); while there are both advantages and disadvantages to such a system (Graham, 1998), this means older personnel

exit permanently. Therefore, dismissal generally occurs as a result of redundancies throughout the entire company. Nevertheless, the HRM department is tasked with the dismissal process. Three types of improper dismissal—such as wrongful, constructive, or unfair dismissals— can be brought to a tribunal and result in substantial damage for the company (Torrington, Hall, & Taylor, 2002). Thus, adequate redundancy pay or several alternative policies should be supplied for employees (Graham & Bennett, 1998).

Japanese companies pursue lifetime commitments and long-term employment, but could not retain all personnel after the 1990s, and avoided cutting excess personnel, as this was unpopular in Japan. These unavoidable processes were influential as a type of tragedy to Japanese society as well as working manga. Many *risutora* scenes involve two situations: the company fires characters, or characters fire other employees.

Some working manga begins with the protagonist’s dismissal (e.g. Aoki, 1990-1996). In the other case, in which characters engage in the dismissal, this is typically an undesirable, heavy task for the characters, as Japanese companies have a culture that treats all employees as family. The protagonists must choose personnel to cut, and sentence them alone. This task is considered a touchstone of superior managers’ ability, in that the protagonists demonstrate their value by executing such dismissals. In working manga, the protagonist may achieve this dismissal and continue working (cf. Hirokane, 1983-), or this task may influence the protagonist to leave the company (cf. Takahashi, 1993-1998). Nonetheless, these episodes are suitable for a case method to discuss dismissals.

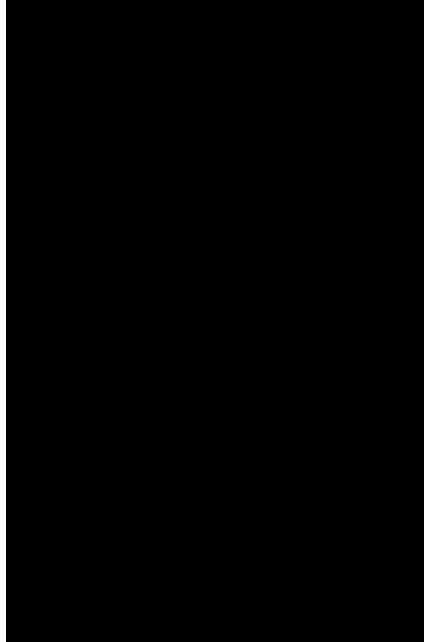
**Figure 5. A scene of dismissal (Hirokane, K. [2000]. *Bucho Shima Kosaku*. Tokyo: Kodansha, Vol.6, p. 94) © Kenshi Hirokane 2000**



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Kosaku Shima noticed personnel were to be fired. They became angry and criticized him, and left the room. How did Shima feel? In the case that this was due to an employee's misconduct, is it easy to fire them? If it is right, how does one proceed in the dismissal process?

**Figure 6. A confrontation with problematic personnel (Hirokane, K. [1991]. *Kacho Shima Kosaku*. Tokyo: Kodansha, Vol.14, p. 66) © Kenshi Hirokane 1991**



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Kosaku Shima noticed problematic behavior (sexual harassment) regarding his colleague Konno. Konno acted politically with his senior manager, but Shima did not fear them. In this case, Konno was ultimately transferred to a local branch of the company, rather than being terminated. A discussion of these cases reflects our own values.

## **5. Organizational behavior in working manga**

Robbins and Judge (2016) claimed that managers in today’s competitive and demanding workplace could not succeed solely on their technical skills—especially as these were the most emphasized in the 1980s—as they must also exhibit good interpersonal skills. The organizational behavior field of study investigates the impacts of individuals, groups, and structures on behavior within organizations, for the purpose of applying such knowledge toward improving an organization’s effectiveness (p. 2). In studying organizational behavior, working manga can play a certain role as business case material. Various types of interpersonal relationships have been described in working manga, which include both appropriate and inappropriate workplace interactions. These descriptions stimulate people to discuss what are considered appropriate relationships and behaviors in organizations, as well as how to build them.

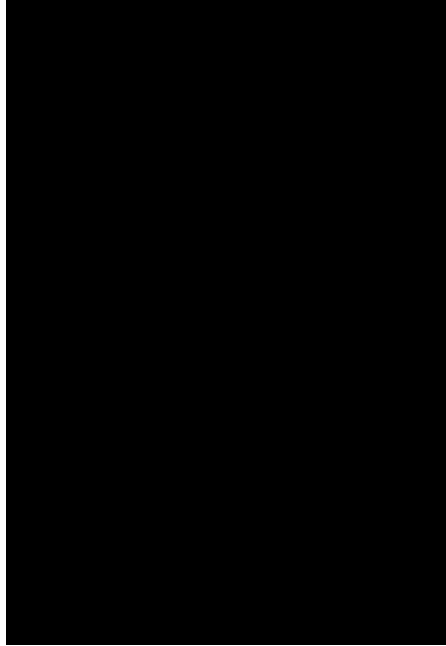
This section addresses some topics in organizational behavior: organizational politics, office cliques, ethical behaviors, organizational conflicts, the organizational culture and socialization, and teamwork. However, due to their importance the two most significant topics in organizational behavior—leadership and motivation—cannot be addressed in this article, and we leave this as a topic of future research.

### **5.1 Organizational politics**

Robbins and Judge (2016) noted that when people assemble in groups, power is exerted (p.219). Farrell and Petersen (1982) defined organizational politics as “activities that are not required as a part of one’s organizational role, but that influence, or attempt to influence, the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organization” (p.405). Organizational politics influence employees’ behavior and their performance, but alternatively, organizational politics increase employees’ performance (Pfeffer, 1992; 2010; Dillon, 2015). Further, Pfeffer (1992; 2010) introduced the various skills used to obtain power and resources, and the communication network used to overcome organizational politics. Dillon (2015) suggested that annoying managers, colleagues, and conflicts in organizational politics can be used toward success in company.

Organizational politics and political behavior are often described in working manga, and especially in the context of companies (e.g. Hirokane, 1983-) and hospitals (e.g. Nogizaka, Nagai, & Yoshinuma, 2002-2011). For example, Hirokane (1983-) notes the political behaviors used in each instance to change a company’s CEO. When choosing a subsequent CEO, each faction in a company fights to gain board members to vote for a CEO candidate. The protagonist, Shima, is always caught in this fight. Thus, we posit that some scenes are useful for a case study because two CEO candidates are included in this episode.

**Figure 7. A scene discussing two CEO candidates (Hirokane, K. [1999]. *Bucho Shima Kosaku*. Tokyo: Kodansha, Vol.2, p. 73) © Kenshi Hirokane 1999**

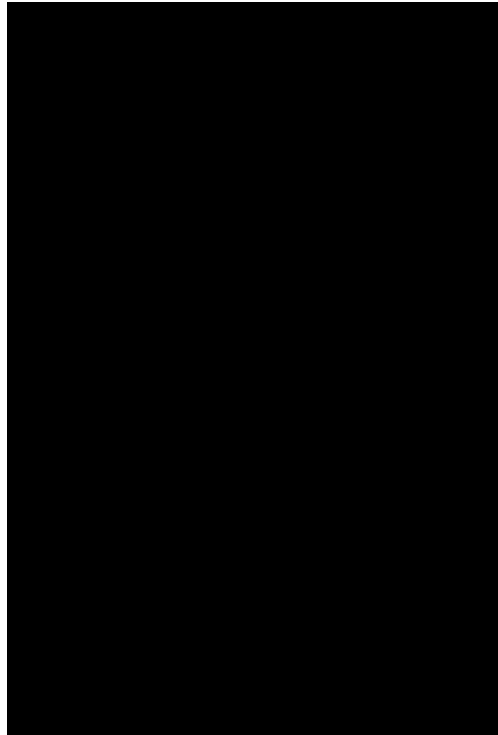


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The CEO and the president discuss two candidates to become the next CEO. The former's management style is stable, and the latter is offensive. They decide to interview the two candidates.

Nogizaka, Nagai, & Yoshinuma (2002-2011) describe the many political behaviors that occur in a hospital setting. The stereotype exists that major university hospitals have a strong, traditional hierarchy and that this political behavior is popular in Japan, which was also written in novels (cf. Yamasaki, 1965).

**Figure 8. The hierarchical relationship in the hospital (Nogizaka, T., Nagai, A. & Yoshinuma, M. [2002]. *Iryu: Team medical dragon*. Tokyo: Shogakukan, Vol.1, p. 131) © Taro Nogizaka Akira Nagai 2002**

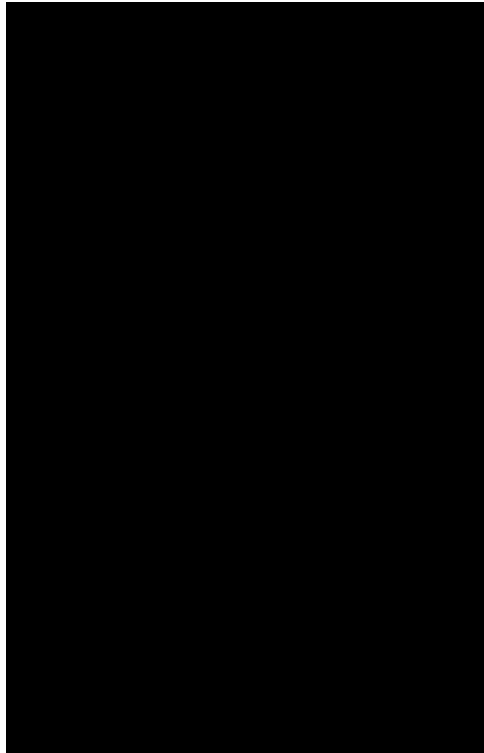


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Nogizaka, Nagai, and Yoshinuma (2002-2011) describe this relationship as the “general’s march (*daimyo-gyoretsu*),” in that a senior professor and doctor brought many young doctors with him on his visiting rounds, and these young doctors had to follow him closely.

In this sub-genre, doctors always struggle to maintain political power, as younger doctors pursue a professorship while tenured professor always pressure them. We posit that some scenes are thought-provoking in a discussion of concrete situations, or specifically, cases including trade-offs: for the protagonist to keep both their professor’s relationship and their own position.

**Figure 9. A scene pursuing power in the hospital system (Nogizaka, T., Nagai, A., & Yoshinuma, M. [2003]. *Iryu: Team medical dragon*. Tokyo: Shogakukan, Vol.4, p. 90) © Taro Nogizaka Akira Nagai 2003**



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In this scene, Akira Kato (the female character) speaks with Ryutaro Asada (this manga’s protagonist) about the pursuit of power in the hospital. She desperately wants a professorship, even if she must sell her soul to the devil. She subsequently continues to struggle against her senior professor to achieve her revolution in the hospital. This scene is useful for observers to discuss why power is necessary for certain people.

## **5.2 Office cliques**

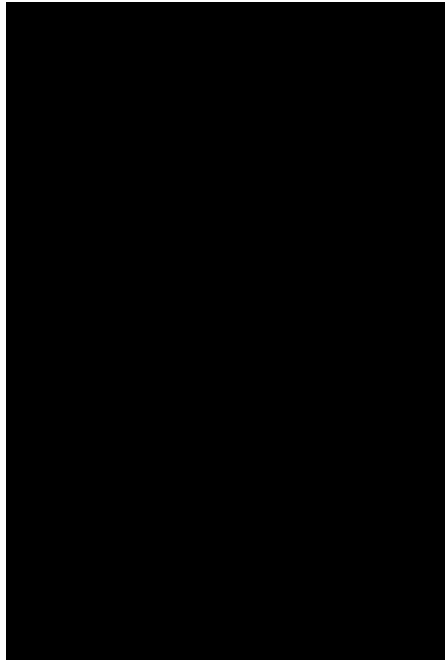
As a result of organizational politics, people often form cliques. Dillon (2015) pointed out that we might miss many opportunities outside of a clique, and suggested to break into other cliques, or build a clique by having people in the clique support your idea and share information.

Office cliques often appear in working manga. While Hirokane’s (1983-) protagonist Kosaku Shima considered himself a “lonely wolf,” in that he did not want to belong to a



certain clique, the people around him often approached him to join their clique regardless of his wishes, and especially during a period when the CEO changed. He had to consider a clique in each instance.

**Figure 10. A scene with office cliques (Hirokane, K. [1986]. *Kacho Shima Kosaku*. Tokyo: Kodansha, Vol.2, p. 194) © Kenshi Hirokane 1986**



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Kosaku Shima was ordered to gather native information on his general manager's rival. Young Shima declared that he would not belong to any clique.

### **5.3 Ethical Behavior**

Employees increasingly face ethical dilemmas and choices, in which they must identify proper and improper conduct (Robbins & Judge, 2016, p.13). Employees within an organization are sometimes unaware of their unethical behavior to stop it (cf. Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011). Everyday communication is necessary between a company and its employees to understand business ethics (Bader, 2014), and to promote this, companies must possess the values in which employees can invest their trust (Suchanek, 2015). The denouncing of injustice is important to maintain in an organization, but in-group favoritism, ordinary prejudices, and eccentricities often prevent people from making ethical decisions

(Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011).

Many scenes in working manga involve characters facing issues with business ethics. Further, these ethical problems often connect to the characters’ professionalism and growth, which might be easily expressed in describing the ethical problem. Ethical problems often occur in various business situations, not only in the company (Hirokane, 1983-; Arai, 1990-1994), but also in certain industries. Specifically, these industries closely relate to human life—such as the medical industry (Nogizaka, Nagai, & Yoshinuma, 2002-2011; Sato, 2002-2006), firefighting (Soda, 1995-1999), Italian restaurant services (Sekiya, 2005-2009), public service (Kashiwagi, 2014-), and the coast guard (Sato and Komori, 1998-2001)—and these ethical problems are easily handled. Characters are often faced with certain ethical situations and decide to solve them. These episodes are suitable for business cases to discuss why people cannot often behave ethically.

**Figure 11. Unethical behavior in a hospital setting (Nogizaka, Nagai & Yoshinuma [2004]. *Iryu: Team medical dragon*, Tokyo: Shogakukan, 7, p.62) © Taro Nogizaka Akira Nagai 2004**



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A doctoral intern has left a surgical needle in a patient's body. A senior professor and mentor doctor recommend that he conceal this fact, and the intern obeys this order. Some days later, a nurse informs Dr. Asada (this manga's protagonist), and he tells the doctors to operate again. The mentor-professor in this scene explains the concrete process for concealment, and the senior professor calls his idea the "model answer."

These scenes from working manga can be a relevant topic for discussion regarding how people can act ethically.

#### **5.4 Organizational conflict**

Organizational conflict is defined as a process that begins when one party perceives another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something the first party cares about (Robbins & Judge, 2016, p.232). Organizational conflict has two types: functional and dysfunctional conflict. Traditionally, conflict is perceived as a dysfunction,

while the interactional perspective of conflict proposes that not all conflict is bad. Thus, conflict is currently classified into three categories: task, relationship, and process conflict. Relationship conflicts are almost always dysfunctional, and lower-level task and process conflicts are often functional (Robbins & Judge, 2016, pp. 232-233). Further, five types of intentions occur in handling a conflict process: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating (Robbins & Judge, 2016, pp. 235-239).

Many conflicts occur in working manga, and these span all three conflict types. Conflicts are described as a wall or obstacle for the characters, and they must almost always overcome these to facilitate their growth. Task conflicts were described as high-level goals or creative problem-solving (e.g. Takahashi, 1993-1998) or a dangerous task (e.g. Sato & Komori, 1998-2001), and process conflicts were described as competitive sales (e.g. Arai, 1990-1994) or a difficulty in operations (e.g. Nogizaka, Nagai, & Yoshinuma, 2002-2011). The handling intention conflict type was often collaborative, including not only the party of conflict, but also those around them. A network of other people with expertise often help the protagonist overcome conflicts.

**Figure 12. A scene with task conflict solved using a network (Hirokane, K. [1999]. *Bucho Shima Kosaku*. Tokyo: Kodansha, Vol.3, p. 52) © Kenshi Hirokane 1999**



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Kosaku Shima (this manga's protagonist) succeeds in the wine industry by using a human network. He is lucky, in that the women around him support his business, and decide to use a famous wine reviewer who they know.

Heavy relationship conflicts induce annoying or troublesome behavior in the workplace. These behaviors are described in working manga as the “villainous” behavior that annoys characters. That person in working manga is the wall or obstacle for characters, a fight or battle occurs between the characters as entertainment, and the villain is defeated.

**Figure 13. A scene to search for a concealed microphone (Hirokane, K. [1999]. *Bucho Shima Kosaku*. Tokyo: Kodansha, Vol.4, p. 141) © Kenshi Hirokane 1999**



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The people resist Kosaku Shima’s installation of a concealed microphone in his office. Shima and his colleague had previously discovered a concealed microphone, and decided to use it for revenge.

A scene of conflict in working manga is useful, as it promotes a discussion of how villains are handled. However, most conflicts in working manga are relationship conflicts, and task or process conflicts almost always occur due to interpersonal relationships, including hierarchical barriers (e.g. Nogizaka, Nagai, & Yoshinuma, 2002-2011), bureaucratic situations (e.g. Yuki, 1988-1994), workplace business (e.g. Sekiya, 2005-2009), a competition among companies (e.g. Arai, 1990-1994), or competition within an organization (e.g. Matsuda, 2012), among others.

### **5.5 Organizational culture and socialization**

Schein (1978; 2004) defined organizational culture as a “pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those

problems” (p. 17). Culture is the origin of competitive advantage (Peters & Waterman Jr., 1982), which may conversely lead some companies to self-destruction (Sheth, 2007). While culture leads a company’s employees, new employees especially need help in adapting to the prevailing culture. That help occurs in the form of socialization (Robbins & Judge, 2016, p.274). Further, Robbins and Judge (2016) explain that the socialization process has three stages: pre-arrival, encounter, and metamorphosis. The pre-arrival stage recognizes that each individual arrives with a set of values, attitudes, and expectations about both the work and the organization. In the encounter stage, a new member confronts the possibility that expectations may differ from reality, and experiences a reality shock. Finally, the metamorphosis stage changes the new member, or they may sometimes leave the company.

Many working manga, both salaryman-manga and professional manga, address this reality shock. These types of manga use the reality shock as the wall that the characters overcome, and they grow well as a result.

**Figure 14. A scene with a reality shock (Kashiwagi [2014]. *Kenko de bunka-teki na saitei- gendo no seikatsu*. Vol.1, pp. 60-61.) © Haruko Kashiwagi 2014**



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Yoshitsune (a caseworker and this manga’s protagonist) faces a client’s suicide during her introductory period. She feels a heavy shock in this reality, but her colleague advises her regarding how to overcome it. These scenes can be a trigger to remember our own reality shocks, and a useful discussion can occur to note how these can be used.

## **5.6 Teamwork**

Robbins and Judge (2016) claimed that teams were increasingly a primary means for organizing work in contemporary business firms. Teams differ from groups, in that the former involve two or more individuals, interacting and interdependent, who have come together to achieve particular objectives, and generate a positive synergy through coordinated efforts. Their individual efforts result in a level of performance greater than the sum of their individual inputs (Robbins & Judge, 2016, pp. 159-160).

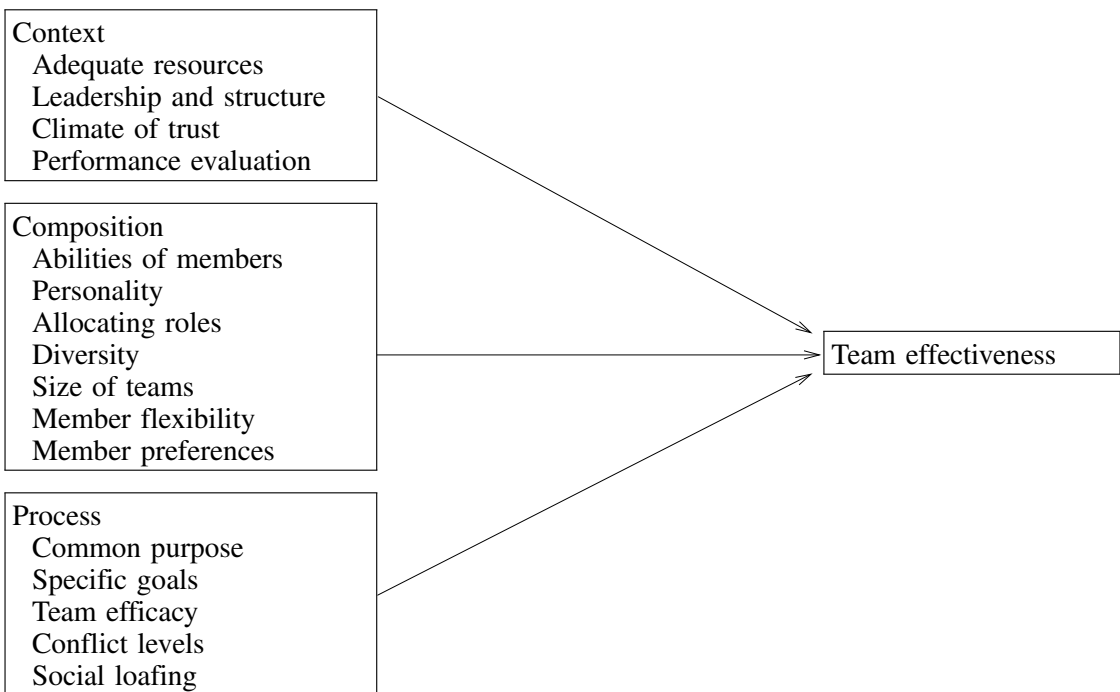


**Table 2. Comparing work groups and work team**

Work Groups		Work Teams
Share information	Goal	Collective performance
Neutral (sometimes negative)	Synergy	Positive
Individual	Accountability	Individual and mutual
Random and varied	Skills	Complementary

(Source: Robbins & Judge, 2016, p. 161.)

However, teams experience difficulty in functioning well (Edmondson, 2012), as effective teams need both resources and management. Robbins and Judge (2016) summarized a team effectiveness model, which consists of resources and other contextual influences, compositions, and processes. Each part includes some factors, as noted below:

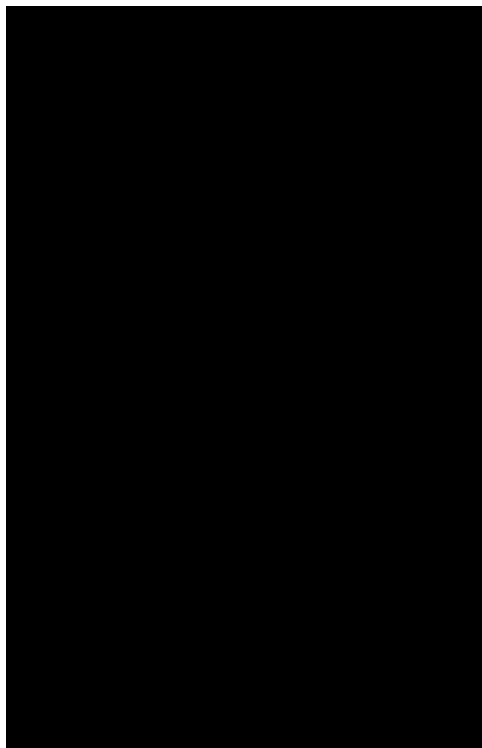
**Figure 15. Team effectiveness model (Robbins & Judge, 2016, p. 165)**

Edmondson (2012) considered teambuilding as dynamic and continuous, and claimed that this is key in learning in an organization, innovating, and maintaining a competitive advantage. The author discussed four leadership behaviors that promote teambuilding: framing for learning, making it safe to team-build by constructing a psychological safety in

the team, learning from failure, and teambuilding across boundaries.

The main characters in working manga often team-build, and especially in professional manga, in which these teams often consist of strong-willed individuals. Building a team is described as incredibly difficult, but the team’s quality gradually increased as the characters grew.

**Figure 16. A scene with good team-building (Nogizaka, T., Nagai, A. & Yoshinuma, M. [2009]. *Iryu: Team medical dragon*. Tokyo: Shogakukan, Vol.21, p. 52) © Taro Nogizaka Akira Nagai 2009**



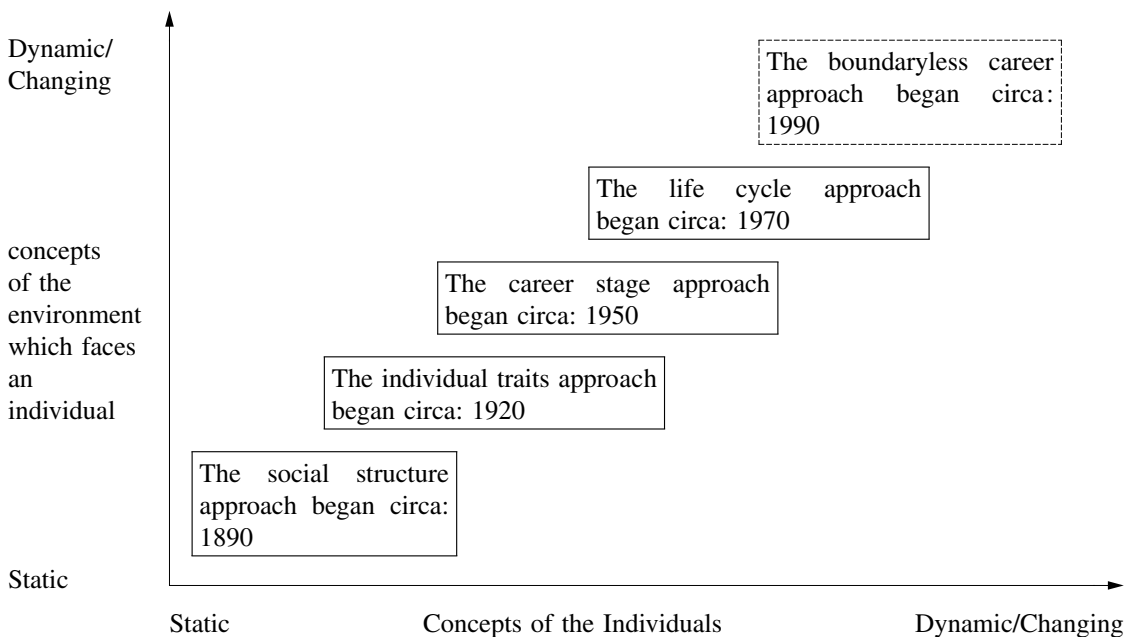
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This team consists of some doctors, an intern, and a nurse. All characters have high-level skills, but are such individuals. How is this team strengthened? What must the leader (Dr. Kato, or the female doctor on the left in this scene) do?

## **6. Career events in working manga**

Hall (1976) defined the term “career” as the “individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person’s life” (p.4). An individual’s career represents the person’s entire life in a work

setting; as work is a primary factor for most people, thinking about a career is a critical task for individuals (Hall, 1976). Various career theories have developed over the last half-century, which Sonnenfeld and Kotter (1982) classified into four decades: the social structure approach, which began circa 1890; the individual traits approach, which began circa 1920; the career-stage approach, which began circa 1950; and the life cycle approach, which began circa 1970. If we could add one more approach after these, it could be noted that the boundary-less career approach began around 1990 (cf. Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Sociologists first noted the social structure approach, which focused on the relationship between social status and career attainment (e.g. Gottfredson, 1996). The second approach, the individual traits approach, was also called the “matching approach,” and focused on the matching of individual characteristics with vocational choices (e.g. Holland, 1985). The third approach, the career-stage approach, focused on the process of and stages in occupational choices and development (e.g. Schein, 1978). The fourth life cycle approach observed the entire lifetime, including work, family, and the individual, and not just early career years (e.g. Levinson, 1978). The final boundary-less career approach focuses on the career across several companies.



**Figure 17. The maturation of career theory<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup> Sonnenfeld and Kotter (1982), p.34. We added “The boundaryness career approach”.

Today, developing an employee’s career presents an important problem for a company and its human resources department (Dessler, 2000). However, this does not mean that a company should control its personnel’s careers. Individuals’ intentions and an organization’s policy are combined to lead to a career design (Schein, 1978).

Thinking of one’s career presents a serious problem for individuals, and characters in working manga often worry about their careers. This section discusses some career problems in each career event: job hunting, promotion and transfer, job changing, diversity, and work-life balance.

### **6.1 Job hunting**

Many problems exist in the job-hunting processes in both Japan and the United States (cf. Ehrenreich, 2006). Job hunting especially exists in Japan as a unique social habit, comprised of a fixed recruiting period, selection by educational level, and student job hunting. For students, job hunting is a part of socialization, and a particularly harsh period.

Working manga often illustrates job hunting scenes. However, the protagonists merely search for work, with a few exceptions from Hirokane (1983-) or Matsuda (2012-), in which job hunting students sometimes emerged around the main characters.

**Figure 18.** A scene of job hunting in a small company (Onoda, M. [2012]. *Hanasaki-san no shukatsu nikki*. Tokyo: Shogakukan, Vol.1, p. 127) © Mao Onoda 2012



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In a small IT company, there are an interviewer and an interviewee (this manga's protagonist). The interviewer asks the protagonist to introduce herself. The bottom frame displays part of a curriculum vitae.

Job hunting scenes in working manga only involve students, and these would be a trigger to prepare them for their future work and promote their socialization.

## 6.2 Promotion and transfer

Promotion, or an upward movement on the organizational ladder, often only means a career for some people (Dessler, 2000). Employers must decide on what basis to promote employees:

Decision 1: Is seniority or competence the rule?

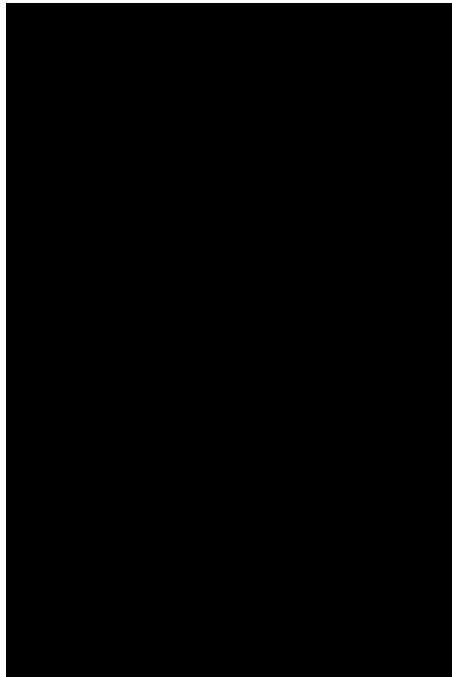
Decision 2: How is competence measured?

Decision 3: Is the process formal or informal?

Decision 4: Vertical, horizontal, or other? (Dessler, 2000, pp.368-369)

Working manga has few scenes that involve promotion because a substantial publishing period is necessary for working manga to incorporate a character’s promotion. Some working manga illustrate promotional scenes at hospitals (e.g. Nogizaka, Nagai, & Yoshinuma, 2002-2011), restaurants (Sekiya, 2005-2009), and a sportswear company (Takahashi, 1993-1998). Remarkably, Hirokane (1983-) described promotions in each period of Kosaku Shima’s life; at each promotion, top management or board members promoted him, and not the HRM department, although he works in a Japanese company.

**Figure 19. A promotion scene (Hirokane, K. [1992]. *Kacho Shima Kosaku*. Tokyo: Kodansha, Vol.17, p. 202) © Kenshi Hirokane 1992**



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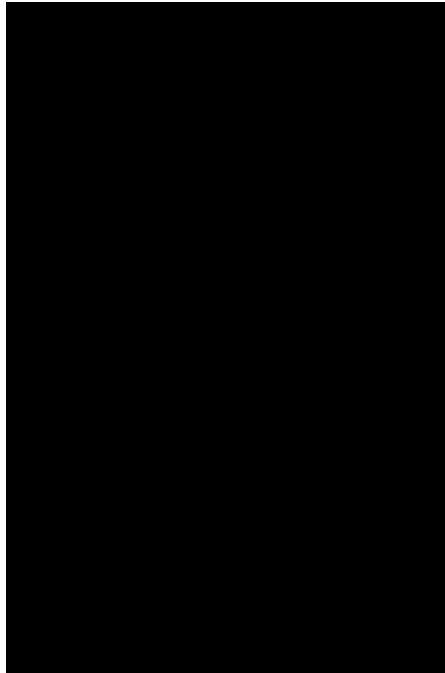
The next CEO, Nakazawa, offers him a promotion to general manager. While he did not want to belong to a certain clique, his support of Nakazawa as the next CEO mandates that he cannot decline this order. He decides to continue to support Nakazawa as his “right hand.”

Alternatively, job transfer involves a move of the place where people work, and is popular in Japanese companies. Two major tracks exist in Japanese companies: a managerial

track and a limited track. Workers in the latter track do not transfer their workplace, and are instead limited in their salary. Managerial track workers must accept workplace transfers instead of salary increases. However, various problems make such transfers difficult, despite working on this managerial track, and most are family-related (Dessler, 2000). The Japanese worker, who is almost always male, must often choose to transfer alone and leave their family. International transfers are especially difficult, but workers accept these hoping to receive a promotion to a higher position despite some problems.

Hirokane's (1983-) Kosaku Shima was often ordered to transfer his workplace, both domestically and internationally, but he always accepted because he had no other family.

**Figure 20. A scene accepting a job transfer abroad (Hirokane, K. [1990]. *Kacho Shima Kosaku*. Tokyo: Kodansha, Vol.10, p. 69) © Kenshi Hirokane 1990**



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Kosaku Shima accepts an order to transfer to the Philippines. He recognizes the acceptance of this transfer as his destiny as a salaryman, and considers this the meaning of his life. Kosaku Shima's case is popular, but job transfers often create career problems for workers. These cases present opportunities to consider careers in the future.

**Figure 21. A scene of worry about a job transfer (Nogizaka, T., Nagai, A. & Yoshinuma, M. [2009]. *Iryu: Team medical dragon*. Tokyo: Shogakukan, Vol.21, p. 88) © Taro Nogizaka Akira Nagai 2009**



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Keisuke Fujiyoshi is a physician who works in the same hospital as the protagonist, and worries whether he can move to a hospital near his sick daughter. He plays an important role in the hospital, and believes he cannot move.

### **6.3 Job changing**

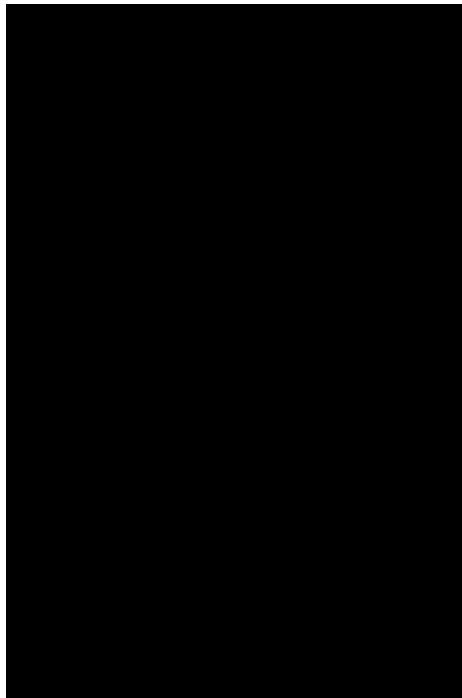
Job changing, or moving from one company to another, has gained popularity in Japan despite lifetime commitments' continued importance in Japanese companies (Abegglen, 1958). A significant decision for working people and their careers, jobs change for two reasons: positive and negative. For example, one positive reason is that working people can decide whether they change a job, and can spontaneously choose a new company. On the other hand, one negative reason is that working people cannot decide the results of a dismissal or redundancy.

Job changes have been illustrated several times in working manga, but regarding



peripheral people, and not the protagonist or main character. These events influenced characters to consider their careers.

**Figure 22. A scene discussing job changes (Arai, H. [2009]. *From Miyamoto to you*. Deluxe edition. Tokyo: Ota Shuppan. Vol.1, p. 318) © Hideki Arai 2009**



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Hiroshi Miyamoto (this manga's protagonist) asks Jinbo, a senior colleague, why he changed jobs and left a company. Jinbo answers that he is 28 years old, and felt it was a good time to change. Miyamoto realized he had to grow quickly before Jinbo left.

One scene also involves a character who learns his friends' jobs have changed as they left a company.

**Figure 23. A scene with alumni (Hirokane, K. [2002]. *Bucho Shima Kosaku*. Tokyo: Kodansha, Vol.13, p. 38) © Kenshi Hirokane 2002**



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Kosaku Shima attends an alumni event with old friends, all over 50 years of age; 5 of the 10 members changed their jobs. During and after this event, Shima discusses his friends' real life experiences with them, and reflects upon his own career.

This scene from working manga stimulates observers to clearly imagine the reality of changing jobs.

#### **6.4 Diversity**

Williams and O'Reilly (1998) explained that there are three theoretical backgrounds in investigating diversity: social categorization, similarity/attraction, and informational/decision-making. Social categorization is the distinction between the “in-group” and “out-group”; “in-group” members like themselves, in contrast, perceive out-group members as less trustworthy, honest, and cooperative than members of their own group. Similarity/attraction denotes a similarity in attributes, ranging from attitudes and values to demographic variables, which increase interpersonal attraction and liking. Information/decision-making theories propose that variances in a group's composition can directly and positively impact an increase in the skills, abilities, information, and knowledge that diversity brings,

independent of what happens in the group process (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998, pp.83-89). Further, Williams and O'Reilly (1998) emphasized five diversity variables in previous research: tenure; age; sex; race; and background, such as education or nationality.

Working manga has often described the influences of diversity. In a typical storyline, the protagonist or main characters initially enter a certain group, and are perplexed by group members that differ in tenure, age, or sex. Subsequently, the protagonist or main characters struggle to adapt in the group, the members gradually accept them, and they finally cooperate, and even solve problems using the positive effects of diversity. For example, Takahashi's (1993-1998) protagonist Yuji must adapt to a project team consisting of only women.

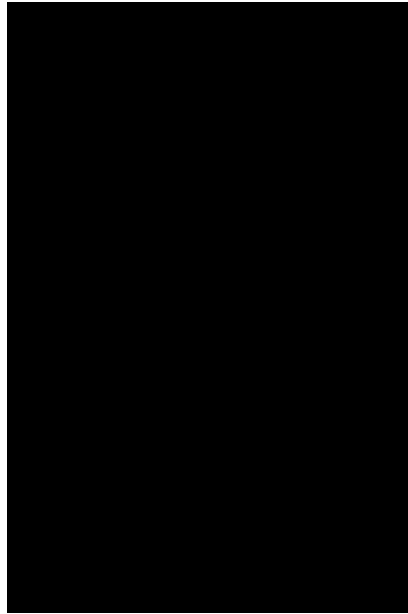
**Figure 24.** A scene with the rejected protagonist (Takahashi, S. [2003]. *Ilhito: For new natural life*. Tokyo: Shogakukan. Shogakukan bunko, Vol.2, p. 188) © Shin Takahashi 2003



(Deleted by the reason of copyright)

Yuji Kitano (this manga's protagonist) was moved to a certain project team that consists of only female workers, but the team leader became angry at this move. Initially, the team members did not welcome Yuji, but his sincerity toward the team members and the job compelled them to change so the team could produce new products. Yuji then moved again, to a running team at a particular university. Its members did not accept him at first because he was not a student; similarly, Yuji and the team's members cooperated in their running practice to eventually compete in the Ekiden, a long-distance relay race.

**Figure 25. A scene in which the runners celebrate the salaryman (Takahashi, S. [2004]. *Ihito: For new natural life*. Tokyo: Shogakukan. Shogakukan bunko, Vol.8, p. 272) © Shin Takahashi 2004**



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The university's runners congratulate Yuji after winning the race.

## 6.5 Work-life balance

Work-life balance, or the need to balance work and leisure/family activities (Bratton & Gold, 2007) has increasingly become an important problem with the expansion of a global economy and communication technology (Robbins & Judge, 2000). Faced with a highly competitive labor market, work-life policies and practices are necessary to attract, retain, and motivate highly skilled and knowledgeable workers; ensure employees' commitment (Bratton & Gold, 2007, p.149); and improving quality in employees' work lives (Wilton, 2016).

The work-life balance theme is unpopular in working manga, although some titles have addressed it. For example, Nogizaka, Nagai, and Yoshinuma (2002-2011) used this theme with a female doctor working in a hospital, who worried about her pregnancy and whether she should continue her work. She had previously talked with Akira Kato, a main character and senior cardiac surgeon, but she did not provide any useful advice. Kato understood that any advice was not meaningful unless she had power in the organization.

**Figure 26.** A scene with advice in the operating room (Nogizaka, T., Nagai, A. & Yoshinuma, M. [2003]. *Iryu: Team medical dragon*. Tokyo: Shogakukan, Vol.18, p. 74) © Taro Nogizaka Akira Nagai 2003



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After she gained the power to reform the organization, she ultimately advised her pregnant colleague to have a baby and to continue her work, because she had built a medical team that was prepared to cover her in her absence. This case reveals the importance of organizational support for work-life balance. Further, these scenes convey that work-life balance is a problem not only in the workplace, but also across entire organizations. A discussion of this scene could provide a useful case study about work-life balance.

As aforementioned, we considered some topics about career events, and relative to working manga, which describes characters' careers in detail. These examples used as business cases can lead observers to draw conclusions about their own organizations' commitment to work-life balance.

## **7. Personnel development in working manga**

Personnel development has always been a critical mission, as well as the most difficult problem faced by the company. Bratton and Gold (2003) explained human resource development as the procedures and processes that purposely seek to provide learning activities to enhance the skills, knowledge, and capabilities of people, teams, and the organization to change actions and achieve desired outcomes (p. 306). Human resource development is a strategic problem faced by a company and its investors to develop individuals’ potential (Wilton, 2016). As personnel development and corporate strategy are closely connected (Dessler, 2000), a five-step training and development process is available for this development, including: the need for analysis, instructional design, validation, implementation, and evaluation (pp.251-253). Similarly, daily training in the organization is also important, such as on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and coaching or mentoring (Dessler, 2000; Torrington, Hall, & Taylor, 2002).

As Craig (2000) noted, Japanese manga typically includes characters’ spiritual growth in their stories. Further, working manga includes spiritual growth as well as a growth in the capability to work. For example, Hirokane’s (1983-) protagonist Kosaku Shima was an immature person at the onset of the story. The manga illustrates the long and winding road of growth in his spirituality and capability. Working manga is incredibly applicable in a case study discussion of both sides of this growth.

This section discusses the topics available as business cases in many workplace problems: on-the-job training, apprenticeship training, mentoring, and coaching.

### **7.1 On-the-job and apprenticeship training**

When personnel are trained in their work, this is often done on-the-job, and especially in Japanese companies. On-the-job training involves a person learning a job by actually performing it (Dessler, 2000, p. 257), which results in a kind of apprenticeship in Japan. Dessler (2000) explained apprenticeship training as a structured process by which individuals become skilled workers through a combination of classroom instruction and on-the-job training (p.259); however, even typical training in Japanese organizations includes these characteristics to convey tacit knowledge at work. Trainees must observe another person’s work to learn how to work, and no manuals exist to delineate how to work in a certain job. This is especially the case in work situations in which a new, skilled person could replace an older employee in a working position. In such situations, the trainee must “steal” the job skills and knowledge of how to work well, as in an apprenticeship.

These situations, such as apprenticeships, appear as a problematic, high wall for the main characters in working manga, and especially at the beginning of the story before they become more skilled. This occurs not only in professional manga—including the restaurant

(Sekiya, 2005-2009), sommelier (Jo, Matsui, & Hori, 2006-2012), and hospital industries (Sato, 2002-2006; Nogizaka, Nagai, & Yoshinuma, 2002-2011)—but also in salaryman-manga, including trading companies (Hosono, 2014-2015), public service (Kashiwagi, 2014 -), and the coast guard (Sato & Komori, 1998-2001). Although the main character was a skilled expert, a substitute character had to learn like an apprentice (cf. Nogizaka, Nagai, & Yoshinuma, 2002-2011).

For example, Sekiya (2005-2009) described this situation in the context of an Italian restaurant. The main character Ban, a trainee of an Italian cook, was hired by an exclusive restaurant, and had to learn how to work there as a part of a culinary group. The other restaurant employees did not teach him, because they were concerned he would possibly take their position. Initially, he could not master their cooking speed and quality, but one day, the senior cook advised him to observe the other cook's sophisticated work.

Ban, the cook's apprentice and this manga's protagonist, was exhausted by his busy work; the senior cook Asuka advised him to observe the other cook's sophisticated movements in detail (Figure 27). This was not something to be taught, and would not be written anywhere: it had to be learned by observation.

For the trainee, the other person in the working space is always the "learning resource" to teach them how to work (Lave & Wenger, 1991), but the trainee is often not aware of this. In Ban's case, the senior cook informed him, and she became his mentor. It is important to build a personnel network for workplace education, and to grow well and quickly. However, trainees often learn incorrect concepts by independent learning through observation, which often create conflicting feelings, delay their growth, or cause worry (cf. Sato, 2002-2006).

**Figure 27. A scene with learning by observing (Sekiya, T. [2005]. *Banbino!* Tokyo: Shogakukan, Vol.2, p.54) © Tetsuji Sekiya 2005**



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## 7.2 Mentoring

Developmental relationships exist in the workplace that enhance individuals' growth as well as advancement, called “mentoring relationships” (Kram, 1988). This type of relationship has become increasingly popular in the workplace; further, mentoring, or “off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work, or thinking” (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995), is considered an important managerial activity (Bratton & Gold, 2003). Moreover, Kram (1988) noted that mentoring had two functions: career and psychosocial. Career functions are the aspects of the relationship that enhance the learning of workplace tasks and preparing for advancement in an organization. Psychosocial functions include the aspects of a relationship that enhance a sense of competence, clarity of identity, and effectiveness in a professional role. These functions collectively enable individuals to address the challenges in each career stage (Kram, 1988, p.22). Career functions consist of five elements: sponsorship; exposure and visibility; coaching, which Kram believes is a part of mentoring; protection; and challenging assignments. Psychosocial functions also consist of four elements: role modeling, acceptance and confirmation,



counseling, and friendship. Kram (1988) posits that both mentoring functions, but especially psychosocial functions, are enabled for working people because of their experience.

Kram (1988) then described a four-phase mentor relationship model, and suggested that once these mentoring functions were static and incomplete, this dynamic perspective illuminated how and why essential relationship characteristics changed, as well as this change's impact on each individual's development (pp.47-48). These phases include: an initiation phase, in which the relationship begins; a cultivation phase, in which the provided range of functions expands to a maximum; a separation phase, in which the relationship is altered by structural changes in an organizational context and/or by psychological changes within one or both individuals; and a redefinition phase, in which the relationship either evolves into a completely new form or ends entirely (p.48).

**Table 3. Phases of the mentor relationship<sup>3</sup>**

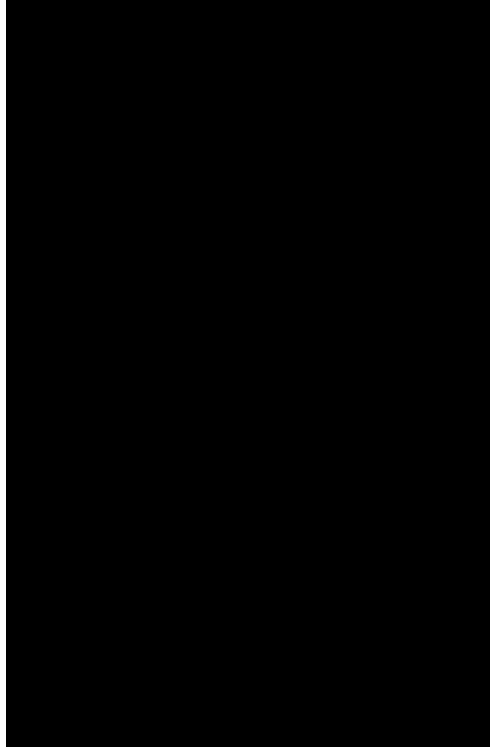
Phase	Definition	Turning Point
Initiation	A period of six months to a year when the relationship begins and becomes important to both managers.	Fantasies become concrete expectations. Expectations are met; the senior manager provides coaching, challenging work, and visibility; the junior manager provides technical assistance, respect, and a desire to be coached. Opportunities for interaction exist around work tasks.
Cultivation	A period of two to five years with a maximum range of career and psychosocial functions.	Both individuals continue to benefit from the relationship. Opportunities for meaningful and more frequent interactions increase. An emotional bond deepens and intimacy increases.
Separation	A period of six months to two years after a significant change in the structural role relationship and/or in the emotional experience of the relationship.	The junior manager no longer wants guidance, but rather, the opportunity to work more autonomously. The senior manager faces a mid-life crisis and is less available to provide mentoring functions. Job rotation or promotion limits opportunities for continued interaction; career and psychosocial functions can no longer be provided. A blocked opportunity creates resentment and hostility that disrupt positive interactions.
Redefinition	An indefinite period after the separation phase when the relationship ends or takes on significantly different characteristics, making it a more peer-like friendship.	The stresses of separation diminish, and new relationships are formed. The mentor relationship is no longer needed in its previous form. Resentment and anger diminish; gratitude and appreciation increase. Peer status is achieved.

<sup>3</sup> Kram (1988), p. 49.

This four-phase mentor relationship model is critical for reading and selecting manga for a case study. Especially in longer stories, the relationship is often lost between characters when suddenly starting a manga title, unless it is read from the beginning. This four-phase model can lead us to understand which phase their story’s character is experiencing.

Working manga also describes mentoring, the dual function of which occurs in many situations—and especially the psychosocial function. This often triggers characters to overcome a problem or troublesome experience. There are many mentors for a character, and especially a main character. We further discuss this mentoring relationship using the work of Nogizaka, Nagai, and Yoshinuma (2002-2011). Noboru Ijuin, one of the main characters, was a medical intern who feared the power balance in the hospital. However, he was brought into the medical team, and grew through the other team members’ mentoring.

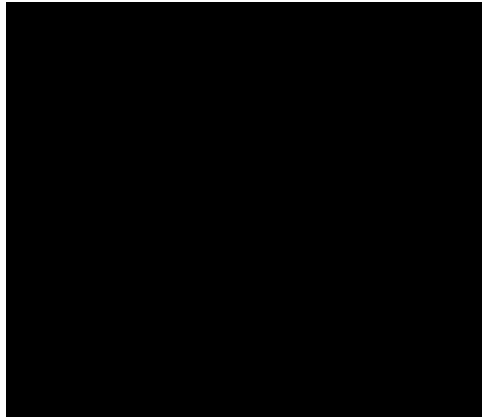
**Figure 28. A mentoring scene (Nogizaka, T., Nagai, A. & Yoshinuma, M. [2003]. *Iryu: Team medical dragon*. Tokyo: Shogakukan, Vol.2, p. 124) © Taro Nogizaka Akira Nagai 2003**



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Ijuin, the main character and a medical intern, hesitated to use a new cardiac pacemaker against the direction of a senior doctor-professor. Fujiyoshi, a physician, advised him to “listen to the patient’s inner voice” and think about the patient. As he participated in many operations, Ijuin considered leaving the team—and especially moving away from his mentor, Ryutaro Asada, this manga’s protagonist—and joining another doctor’s team. The other team members were concerned about him.

**Figure 29. A scene illustrating the third stage of mentoring (Nogizaka, T., Nagai, A. & Yoshinuma, M. [2007]. *Iryu: Team medical dragon*. Tokyo: Shogakukan, Vol.14, p. 11) © Taro Nogizaka Akira Nagai 2007**



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Asada told a colleague that Ijuin would return and work with the team again after he grew in the other team. As his mentor, Asada accepted the third stage of mentoring: the separation. Ijuin later returned to Asada's team, having gained further experience, and hoped to learn more from Asada; this exemplifies the final stage of mentoring. Working manga is useful to discuss mentoring, and especially its four stages, as noted by Kram (1998).

### 7.3 Coaching

Whitmore (2009) explained that coaching involves unlocking people's potential to maintain their own performance (p.10). This differs from mentoring, as Whitmore (2009) claimed that it is more important to consider people's potential than distinguish between mentoring and coaching. Alternately, Wilton (2016) emphasized mentoring as a part of succession planning and management development, and particularly to prepare candidates for senior management roles. Coaching typically occurs between an employee and their immediate line manager, with the more explicit and short-term purpose of contributing to performance improvement and developing individual skills, sometimes with a focus on remedying employee underperformance (p.250). Whitmore (2009) then explained a concrete process of coaching in the “GROW” model. He suggested a sequence of questions that would follow four distinct headings: G) goal-setting for the session, as well as in the short- and long-term; R) reality checking, to explore the current situation; O) options and alternative strategies or courses of action; and W) what is to be done, when, by whom, and the will to do it (p.55).

In coaching people, it is important to confirm the will to be coached (McKenna & Maister, 2002). In working manga, this process involves a scene to confirm the characters' will, which leads their personal growth. Such scenes are suitable for a business case to discuss the roles of coaches.

**Figure 30. The question of coaching to confirm will (Nogizaka, T., Nagai, A. & Yoshinuma, M. [2010]. *Iryu: Team medical dragon*. Tokyo: Shogakukan, Vol.22, p. 86) © Taro Nogizaka Akira Nagai 2010**



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An accident occurred during an operation that required another operation. Asada, this manga's protagonist, confirmed Ijuin's will to perform the operation. Ijuin—a main character and the medical intern whose potential Asada developed—responded that he could operate, and succeeded in the subsequent operation.

The other doctors in this scene by Nogizaka, Nagai, and Yoshinuma (2002-2011) opposed Asada's policy, but he and his team member pushed to grow their young intern. Scenes like this are useful to discuss the meaning and value of coaching behavior.

## 8. Discussion and future research

This article considered the availability of working manga as material for business cases. Ultimately, we will conclude the discussion and describe topics for future research.

At the end of this article, we believe that we demonstrated the future of working manga as case material. Working manga includes many scenes that relate to various business topics on human resource management, organizational behavior, careers, and personnel development. Further, working manga is incredibly suitable for business cases because of its familiarity, visual expression, and rich information. If we could choose adequate scenes in working manga, we could use these to conduct case studies and learn about various topics.

In a discussion about such topics, we must notice how working manga could be used as business cases. First, we must prepare complementary explanations as well as adequate scenes from working manga, but only a few working manga have been translated into foreign languages. Thus, we must prepare scenes from working manga as translated from a foreign language. Similarly, we must also create complementary explanations of such manga, including its background, a character list, short story, and the theme for discussion. This briefing might be easier to prepare than translating the entire story, and especially as the theme for discussion is important for success in case-based learning. Second, we should prepare for certain “answers” in the discussion by incorporating the context surrounding such scenes. As entire stories already exist in various working manga titles, it is advantageous to use working manga for business cases. Further discussion can be facilitated to incorporate them.

In the future, we wish to consider the availability of working manga in other business topics. Specifically, we omitted two major topics of organizational behavior: leadership and motivation. As we believe that working manga is suitable for leadership education, we intend to pursue this possibility. One future goal involves creating case study books for working manga, which requires further investigation.

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<sup>4</sup> In comic references, the publication year expresses the period when the authors illustrated the comic in a magazine format. The first author is the primary artist who drew the manga, and the others are the storywriter or cooperator. If the manga includes an English title on its printed cover, such a title is included in English here.

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